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ABSTRACT

This report is based on presentations by Dr. T. A. Ryan, director of criminal justice planning at the University of South Carolina and Susan Humphrey-Barnett, director of statewide programs for Alaska Department of Corrections. The document gives historical background of correctional systems and their treatment of women from the 18th century to the 1980s. The report also profiles the female-offender population and records changes from the 1970s to the early 1980s. While the national crime rate has been increasing, the proportion of adult females in the total offender population has remained at about 4%. Historically, women in prison have been less educated than women in the general population. From 1975 to 1983, more than half the women in prison had less than a high school education. The percentage of adult female offenders with some college education decreased during the same period. The educational level of Alaska's female offenders was higher than that of the same population nationwide. Nationally, 11% of the female offender population was enrolled in Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs in 1983, while Alaska reported 5% of its population being enrolled. Nine percent of the women nationally were enrolled in General Education Development (GED) programs; Alaska's figure was 16%. Other statistics involve: prisoners' average age, ethnicity, family status, crime classification, vocational training, postsecondary education levels, access to prison industries, testing and counseling, and child care. The document predicts and encourages changes in women's correctional systems in keeping with changes in the general population. The seminar agenda and 11 references are appended. (TES)

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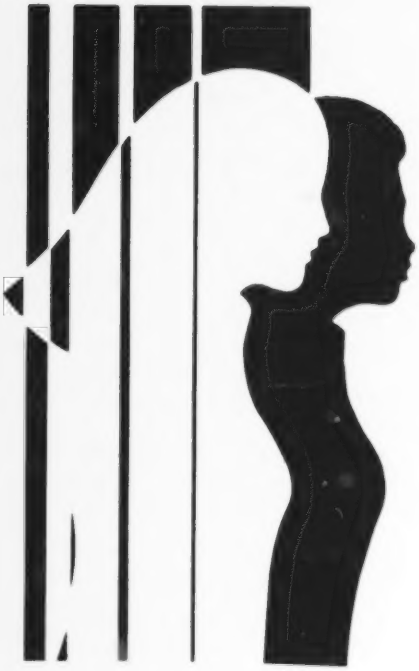
WOMEN IN PRISON:

Does the Justice System Do Them Justice?



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Report On

A Leadership Seminar Sponsored By The Alaska Women's Commission

June 1986

Prepared by Christine Callahan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Introduction 1

I. Historical Perspective 2

II. Profile of Female Offenders 4

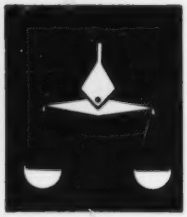
III. Programs and Services 7

Summary 10

Appendix A: Seminar Agenda 11

Appendix B: Information Resources 12

Introduction



In 1986, the Alaska Women's Commission explored the issues and problems of women offenders. Current statistics indicate that the national female arrest rate is climbing — up nearly 20 percent from 1973 — and that in 1984 there were nearly 20,000 women in state and federal prisons in the United States. It is not clear whether the increases in female arrest and conviction are the result of population changes, tougher laws, or changing behavior patterns among women. But historically, because they have constituted a small proportion of total prison population, women have had access to fewer programs and resources than men. In many facilities female inmates have limited vocational training and inadequate access to work release, educational, and recreational programs. Even though a high proportion of incarcerated women have dependent children, visitation privileges are often severely restricted or nonexistent.

As part of a series of Leadership Seminars, the Alaska Women's Commission sponsored a workshop on the current status of female offenders in Alaska. Nationally noted researcher and trainer, Dr. T.A. Ryan, the director of criminal justice planning at the University of South Carolina and author of a state of the art analysis of programs for female offenders, agreed to present her findings. Susan Humphrey-Barnett, the director of statewide programs for the Alaska Department of Corrections, was asked to give an overview of female offenders in Alaska and the programs provided for their rehabilitation. A panel of guests was invited to respond to the two keynote presentations and to generate discussion among the approximately forty-five participants who attended the workshop in Juneau, Alaska, on March 8, 1986.

The Alaska Women's Commission is pleased to present this report on the current status of female offenders in Alaska. The report contains excerpts and information from ***"The Female Offender: Past, Present and Future,"*** a paper presented by Dr. T.A. Ryan at the Commission's seminar. Also included is information contained in the ***ANNUAL REPORT 1985*** published by the Alaska Department of Corrections.

Additional comments or concerns regarding Alaska women in prison can be directed to the Commission in writing or in person.

I. Historical Perspective

Not only has it been comfortable to forget the female offender, it has been relatively easy... They have been few in number... in institutions located far from the mainstream of society... Historically, female offenders have not made waves. They have not flooded the court dockets with lawsuits. They have not engaged in burning down prisons, staging riots, or taking hostages.

T.A. Ryan

Historical Perspective of the Female Offender

Correctional systems have been charged with responsibility for care, control, and custody of the convicted offender, regardless of age, sex, or national origin. Men and women confined in the nation's prisons share many common needs. They need a clean and safe environment in which to serve their sentences. They deserve the chance to change in a positive direction through participation in programs designed to correct. Corrections is responsible for protection of society; this requires control and custody of the offenders in a humane fashion.

Historically, the care, control, and custody of female offenders have all too often reinforced the notion of forgotten or fallen women. Before the nineteenth century men and women were detained in almshouses, jails, and dungeons; mixed with children, the insane, and the handicapped. It was assumed that all social outcasts should be jailed together for better or for worse, and generally it was for the worst.

The 1800's saw Americans waving flags while espousing motherhood and apple pie. Within this context, female offenders who committed crimes were seen as depraved or demented individuals. Clearly something had to be done to get them out of the way. Prisons for men were considered the best place to house these disgraced and dishonored women. So, attics, basements, and separate old buildings within the men's prisons were pressed into use for these fallen souls. The women were given a place for silent contemplation, self-examination and removal from corrupting influences. The female offenders were subjected to long periods of enforced idleness. There were very few women in the prisons, and there were few, if any, activities considered feasible for so few individuals. There was no contact between the sexes other than the women doing the men's laundry. After all, doing laundry was woman's work! The women also sewed. They sewed prison issue clothes for the male inmates, and they stitched American flags. Female offenders have stitched enough flags to blanket the nation, coast to coast, border to border

In 1870, the reform movement supported the construction of separate institutions for women. It was assumed this separation would encourage the development of independence in women by giving them the responsibility for maintaining the institution and its farmlands. In 1873, the first institution for women opened in Indiana. The idea of separate prisons with separate administrations moved slowly. By the 1970's, three-fourths of the states had separate prisons for women.

The 1970's witnessed a trend toward co-corrections, and facilities housing both males and females have become popular today. The Federal Bureau of Prisons spearheaded the movement to co-corrections, opening a co-correctional institution at Fort Worth, Texas in 1971, and two institutions at Pleasanton, California and Lexington, Kentucky in 1974. These facilities in which both male and female offenders are housed are a far cry from the facilities housing both sexes before the reform movement. Co-corrections provides for separate housing, with joint participation in programs.

Based on its early experience with co-correctional facilities, the Federal Bureau of Prisons now has issued guidelines for its own institutions, which it feels must be followed in order for co-correctional facilities to be successful. These guidelines include suggestions for male/female ratios, age group considerations and restrictions on marital status.

The progress in housing female offenders went hand-in-hand with progress in treatment and care of the female offender. Educational and vocational training programs were introduced in prisons. Community resources in education, vocational training and job placement have been increasingly used by community programs and probation and parole officers. Basic education, high school diploma programs or GED have been introduced in varying degrees. Limited opportunities have been made available for college courses, on-the-job training and apprenticeship courses.

Health services, including mental, medical and dental services, have been introduced to some degree. There is some counseling and drug therapy for female offenders. There is a wide variance in the treatment of pregnant females and female offenders with children.

Some correctional systems have very enlightened programs. Others make no special provisions for women. Parity of programs has become a current issue of litigation.

A long overdue interest in the plight of the female offender surfaced in the 1970's as well. Female offenders were caught up in a giant tidal wave that rolled across the nation and as it gained momentum the spotlight of public attention was turned on the nation's women. The feminist movement has been credited with being one of the primary factors militating against the "out of sight, out of mind" philosophy.

The public interest in the female offender sparked in the 1970's was fanned into a flame of public concern in the 1980's. The National Institute of Corrections took a leadership role in bringing to light the needs of female offenders and in providing training to enhance the capabilities of those employed in correctional systems with female offenders. The National Institute of Corrections also supported a national study in 1983* of the female offender and institutional programs for these women. As the female offender gained an increased public recognition, there were features in magazines and special articles and editorials in the news. Amidst all this flurry of attention to female offenders, the public found itself confronted with conflicting stories and general confusion. It often was difficult for a relatively uninformed public to separate fact from fiction, myth from reality.

*The 1983 study funded by the National Institute of Corrections was undertaken by Dr. T.A. Ryan in order to document and analyze the national female prison population and all programs pertaining to them. The purpose of the study was to dispel myths and correct misperceptions about female offenders. The full report on this study is available from the Department of Justice (see Appendix A).

II. Profile of Female Offenders

Offender Population

There have been questions as to whether or not female crime is on the increase, and if the women's movement contributed to an increase in female crime. Forty-four out of 50 states participating in the 1983 study conducted by Dr. T.A. Ryan reported the proportion of adult female offenders in the total offender population in the state. At the time of the study, there were 348,671 offenders incarcerated in prisons in the 44 states providing population statistics. Adult female offenders accounted for 14,851 of the total incarcerated offenders. This was 4 percent of the total offender population. A survey by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1984) revealed a total adult population in state prisons to be 429,603, including 18,857 adult female offenders. This was 4 percent of the total population.

	USA 1984	Alaska 1984	Alaska 1985
total prison population	348,671	1,232	2,124
women in prison	14,851	73	106
% women in prison	4%	6%	5%

Proportion of Female Prisoners USA and Alaska

In 1984, Alaska reported 73 women out of 1,232 inmates, representing 6 percent of the total population. In 1985, there were 103 female prisoners held in Alaska's institutions and 3 at federal facilities.

There has been an increase in the total number of crimes committed by both men and women. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (1985) reports a dramatic increase in crime rate. The imprisonment rate increased by 39 percent from 1970 to 1979. At year end in 1985, the state prison population had reached roughly 500,000 of which 4 percent were women. It is clear that the crime rate is increasing; however, this is true for both men and women. The proportion of adult females in the total offender population nationwide remained stable at roughly 4 percent, the same percentage reported over the years since statistics have been kept.

Adult Female Offender Profile

Who are female offenders? Have they changed in the last ten years?

Age

The age of the adult female offender has not changed to any appreciable extent in the last decade. In 1975, 64 percent of the adult female offenders were under 30 years of age. In 1983, 62 percent were under 30. The largest group was in the 20 to 29 years of age category, which accounted for 55 percent of the total female population.

Statistics on age and ethnicity of Alaska's female population showed the largest age group to be between 20 and 29 years of age in 1985. This is 56 percent of the total female offenders in Alaska at year end, 1985. This compares to 55 percent nationally.

Female Age Group	Number of Inmates	Percent of Inmates
65 and over	1	1%
60-64	0	0
55-59	2	2%
50-54	4	4%
45-49	7	7%
40-44	6	6%
35-39	9	8%
30-34	12	11%
25-29	31	29%
20-24	29	27%
19 and under	5	5%
Total	106	100%

Age of Female Offenders Alaska*

Ethnicity

Nationwide there was a shift in ethnicity over the last decade. In 1975, 50 percent of female offenders were black; 38 percent, white; 12 percent, other, including Hispanics and native American Indians. In 1983, black female inmates accounted for 38 percent of the total population of offenders: white inmates, 50 percent; and 12 percent, other, including Hispanics and native American Indians. Alaska's female inmate population in 1980 was predominantly white, with Native women surpassing black in number (White & Baker, 1984). In 1985, 61 out of 106 female offenders in Alaska were white, representing 58 percent; 27 out of 106, or 25 percent, were Alaska Natives; and, 17 out of 106, or 16 percent, were black. There was one Hispanic, representing 1 percent. Alaska had more white and fewer black female offenders than any other state in the nationwide study.

	USA 1975	USA 1983
White	38%	50%
Black	50%	38%
Other incl. Native American and Hispanic	12%	12%

	ALASKA 1985
White	58%
Black	16%
Alaska Native	25%
Hispanic	1%

Ethnicity of Female Offenders USA and Alaska

Marital and Family Status*

The majority of female offenders in Alaska are single or living apart from their husbands. Nearly half of them have dependents who rely upon them for support.

Married	27%
Separated	15%
Divorced	3%
Single	53%
Widowed	2%

Marital Status — Female Inmates Alaska 1985

No dependents	53%
1 dependent	22%
2 dependents	12%
3 dependents	9%
4 dependents	3%
5 dependents	1%

Female Inmates with Dependents Alaska 1985

Education

Historically, women in prison have had less education than the women in the general population. The educational background of the adult female offenders in the United States in 1983 was less than for women in general.

Nationwide, there was little change in the number of adult female offenders with less than high school education from 1975 to 1983. There was some change in the percentages of adult female offenders with less than an eighth grade education, those with a high school diploma, and those with postsecondary education. In 1975, 59 percent of the women in prison had less than a high school education including 14 percent with less than 8th grade. In 1983, 58 percent of the women in prison had less than high school completion or General Educational Development (GED) equivalency certificate, including 23 percent with less than 8th grade. This represents an increase of 7 percent of the adult female offenders with less than 8th grade education.

The percentage of adult female offenders with a high school diploma or equivalency

**Annual Report 1985, Alaska Department of Corrections.*

certificate increased from 23 percent in 1975, to 33 percent in 1983, an increase of 10 percent. At the same time, the percentage of adult female offenders with postsecondary education was decreased. In 1975, 16 percent of the adult female offenders had some college with 2 percent having a bachelors degree. By 1983, the percentage of women with some college had decreased by 9 percent to only 7 percent of the total female offender population, with less than 1 percent having completed a four-year degree program.

	1975	1983
Less than high school	59%	58%
High School or equivalent	23%	33%
Some postsecondary	16%	7%

Education Level of Female Offenders USA

The educational level of Alaska's female offenders was significantly higher than that of the female offender population nationwide. Twenty percent of Alaskan women had some college, with roughly 15 percent having earned college degrees.

Crime Classification

From a national perspective, there does not appear to be an increase in the rate of violent crimes committed by adult female offenders. The 1975 crime statistics indicated 43 percent of the crimes committed by female felons were violent, including assault, armed robbery, manslaughter, and murder. In 1983, 41 percent of the crimes of female offenders were violent. This compares to 37 percent of Alaska's female offenders.

	1975	1983
Violent crimes	43%	41%
Property crimes	29%	36%
Drug	22%	13%
Other	6%	10%

Crime Classification Female Offenders USA

On December 31, 1985, there were 2,124 inmates being held in Alaska's institutions and at the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Twenty-five percent of these persons were being held for sexual assault, 12 percent for murder/manslaughter, 9 percent for assault, 9 percent for burglary and 8 percent for robbery. Violent offenders accounted for 61 percent of the population, property offenders for 15 percent, substance abuse offenders for 9 percent, and all other offenses for 15 percent.

On December 31, 1985, there were 103 female inmates being held in Alaska's institutions and three at the Federal Bureau of Prisons. Fourteen percent of these persons were being held for murder/manslaughter, 13 percent for driving while intoxicated, 10 percent for theft, 10 percent for drugs, and 9 percent for assault.

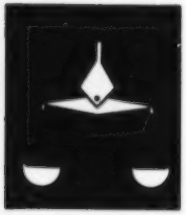
Violent offenders accounted for 37 percent of the population, property offenders for 18 percent, substance abuse offenders for 25 percent and all other offenses for 20 percent.

	All Inmates	Male	Female
Violent crimes	61%	62%	37%
Property crimes	15%	15%	18%
Substance abuse	9%	8%	25%
All other	15%	15%	20%

Crime Classification Alaska December 31, 1986*

**Annual Report 1985, Alaska Department of Corrections.*

III. Programs and Services



The Alaska Department of Corrections, like all corrections agencies throughout the United States, is required to administer the penal system based upon two factors: protection of the public; and, reformation of the offender. Inmates are given an opportunity to change their behavior in a positive direction through the programs provided to them while they are in prison. These programs include, among others, education, vocational training, and prison industries.

Because female offenders historically have comprised such a small proportion of prison population, the programs and facilities provided for them have been typically fewer, older and less adequate. The move toward co-correctional facilities, and toward the sharing of programs with male facilities, can result in improved activities for women in prison. Meadow Creek Correctional Center, the only facility in Alaska designed to hold long-term, sentenced females, was built next to Hiland Mountain, a male facility, so that it could share resources and programs. It has an operating capacity of 56.

Adult Basic Education (ABE)

In the 1983 national analysis, 83 percent of the facilities reported having ABE programs, compared to only 60 percent in 1975. The number of women enrolled in ABE ranged from 0 to 339. Nationally, 11 percent of the female offender population were enrolled in ABE.

Alaska reported 5 percent of the female offender population enrolled in ABE.

Average national enrollment	11%
Alaska enrollment	5%

Female Inmate Participation
Adult Basic Education
1983

General Educational Development (GED)

Eighty-eight percent of the facilities included in the national study reported having GED programs in 1983, compared to only 67 percent a decade earlier. The number of women enrolled ranged from 0 to 175.

Nationwide, 9 percent of the total adult female offender population were enrolled in GED programs.

Alaska reported having 16 percent of the female offender population enrolled in GED programs.

Average national enrollment	9%
Alaska enrollment	16%

Female Inmate Participation
General Education Development
1983

Vocational Training

In 1975, all of the 16 prisons included in the national study had vocational training, but participation was very low. In 1983, 48 out of 58 facilities, representing 83 percent, had vocational training.

In 1983, program options ranged from 1 to 13. Forty-four percent of the facilities had 1 to 3 programs. Fifty-

six percent of the facilities had more than 3 programs. Alaska reported offering one vocational training program for female offenders in 1983. This was food service, one of the three most commonly offered programs nationwide.

Nationwide, 18 percent of the total adult female offender population were enrolled in vocational training; Alaska had 9 percent of its adult female offender population participating in vocational programs.

Average national enrollment	18%
Alaska enrollment	9%

Female Inmate Participation Vocational Training 1983

Postsecondary

The enrollment of adult female offenders in college level courses increased between 1975 and 1983. In 1975 it was reported that roughly half the prisons in the sample offered college courses in academic subjects.

In 1983, the number of facilities offering college level courses had increased by 19 percent from the offerings in 1975. Forty-two out of 58 facilities provided opportunities for adult female inmates to enroll in college programs in 1983. This represented 72 percent of the institutions, compared to 53 percent in 1975.

Of the states reporting enrollment of incarcerated women in postsecondary education, 79 percent of the facilities reporting access to college courses had between 1 percent and 15 percent of the population participating. Alaska was among the states with the highest percentage of the total population of adult female offenders enrolled in college courses. The states with the greatest percentages of the total adult female offender population participating in college programs were Montana, with 12 out 17 women, representing 71 percent; Alaska, with 52 out of 75, representing 69 percent; Iowa, with 63 out of 101, representing 62 percent; and Arizona, with 166 out of 299, representing 56 percent.

Prison Industries

In 1983, 31 out of 58 facilities in the country, representing 53 percent, had prison industries for adult female offenders. Nineteen out of 31 facilities, representing 61 percent, had only one industry; 8 out 31, representing 26 percent, had two industries; and 4 out of 31, representing 13 percent, had three industries. Half of the facilities had a sewing or garment factory, compared to 69 percent in 1975. Alaska reported three industries for incarcerated women: commissary, housekeeping, and laundry.

Nationwide, 10 percent of the adult female offender population worked in prison industries. In Alaska, 13 percent of the female offenders were employed in prison industries.

Testing and Counseling

Ninety-three percent of the states participating in the survey in 1983 reported having some kind of testing and counseling program. Some of the programs were limited to one test and counseling as needed. Other programs, including the one in Alaska, were comprehensive, including educational, personal, and career counseling; achievement, vocational aptitudes and interest, mental ability, psychological and special needs testing.

Child Care

Less than one-third of the facilities reporting in 1983 provided child care programs for incarcerated women. Alaska was among the two-thirds not reporting special child care programs or services.

Summary

Despite the progress that has been made in correctional systems for female offenders, there still are inadequacies. Women still remain "the forgotten offenders."

There are few facilities for female offenders. Therefore, female offenders generally are placed in institutions far from their families and access to jobs. Most of the women have children and family responsibilities. The distance, coupled with transportation problems, creates a stressful situation.

There are a limited number of programs available for female offenders. One reason frequently given for providing only limited programs and services to women is that the high per capita cost for female offenders cannot be justified to budget and control boards. The cost of supervision of females on supervised release curtails program options. The small number of female offenders makes traditional and nontraditional programming very costly.

Not only is the quantity of programs limited, but often the quality leaves much to be desired. In vocational training the female offender often must choose between a few programs which lead to stereotypically female jobs where the pay is poor and the opportunities to become self-sufficient are limited.

The closing years of this century will witness dramatic changes in the national population. Similar changes undoubtedly will occur in the prison populations as well. Female offenders of tomorrow will be older and more educated in keeping with the general trend of the population at large. While Corrections will continue to have primary responsibility for female offenders, there is likely to be an increasing use of community resources. Expanded work-release and study-release programs will need to be developed. Additional halfway houses and restitution centers will be needed so that judges have the option of avoiding sending female offenders away from their home communities.

To work sensitively with these women, correctional workers will continue to need knowledge and skills. They must know what the special needs of the female offender are. They must know what legal issues involve female offenders and they must be aware of the services and resources already available to women.

The next 15 years will see many changes in the American way of life and on the American scene. With change comes challenge. One of the greatest challenges of the future will be the development and implementation of quality programs and services that take into account changes in the profile of the female offender, and changes in social, economic, political and ecological components of the world in which we live.

The challenge is to develop and implement interdisciplinary correctional models to make female offenders constructive, productive, contributing members of society.

Appendix A

Women In Prison:
Does the Justice System Do Them Justice?
March 8, 1986
Juneau, Alaska

AGENDA

KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

National Overview	Dr. T.A. Ryan, Ph.D
Alaskan Perspective	Susan Humphrey-Barnett

REPONSE PANEL

Helen Grant	Inmate at Lemon Creek Correctional Center
Cheryl Mann, ACSW, MSW	Author of a study examining mother/child visitation in prison
Margaret Pugh	Superintendent, Lemon Creek Correctional Center
Nancy Schafer, Ph.D.	Assistant Professor of Justice University of Alaska, Anchorage
Paula Sumdum	Inmate at Meadow Creek Correctional Center

Appendix B: Information Resources

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